

Castlemaine Naturalist

March 2015

Vol. 40.2 #429

Monthly newsletter of the
Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.



Guess who owns this nest (answer on p3)
photo by Joy Weatherill last spring

February General Meeting

Nigel Harland

The guest at our February General Meeting was Geoff Park. Geoff had some serious difficulties returning from a trip to Queensland and we were lucky that he managed to make the meeting at all. The fact that he did illustrates his determination and made for a terrific meeting.

Geoff is a photographer extraordinaire and he concentrates his efforts in a small area near Newstead, which takes in Lake Cairn Curran. He doesn't travel all over the country, but provides a local history of the birds in his area, which no doubt will prove fascinating to future generations.

No doubt the club will be trying to arrange a further visit from Geoff in the not too distant future.

President's Address to the AGM

This is my first President's report, having accepted the position earlier in the year, following Rita's resignation after several years in the position. This being my first report it will be short and to the point.

Firstly, being President seems an important position in the Club, but things are considerably different to that. The Club maintains a very active momentum thanks entirely to the efforts of the Committee members. General meetings, club outings, committee meetings and many other activities happen because we have the committee that we do. I would like members who have served on the Committee last year to please stand up for a moment. Without mentioning their precise activities, I would like to thank all of them for their efforts and I would believe that a vocal thank you from the membership might be appropriate.

I have made this observation before, but membership fees could be halved if we had twice as many members. We could get twice as many members if each one of us recruited just one person. Bring them along for one general meeting or two as a guest and let them make up their own minds – I reckon we could get a lot more members this way – I'll leave it to you.

Perhaps a small point, but the Club receives many requests for donations from other organisations and it is the view of the current committee that we do not support them. We believe that you pay your fees to support the Club and if you wish to support other organisations, that is a matter for you. The only exception to this in recent years has been a specific donation to the Black Saturday bushfire appeal.

Finally, the Committee needs a good turnover of members to ensure that we remain a vibrant organisation. There is no limit to the size of the Committee and I am aware of one member's resignation this year. Committee meetings take place once a month, there is no specific requirement to attend, although we do require a quorum – and you can resign whenever you want. More importantly you can make a positive contribution to the future of your Club.

That brings us to the formal business of the evening, the election of office bearers for the next year. We do have some nominations, but please feel free to add your name to the list.

President Nigel Harland

Vice President Vacant

Secretary George Broadway

Treasurer Elvyne Hogan

Newsletter Editor Noel Young

Committee Members: Geraldine Harris, Max Schlachter, Chris Morris, Richard Piesse

PS I found it a little disappointing that no-one else nominated for positions on the Committee, but it is not too late, there is one meeting per month which lasts about an hour and there is no obligation to attend. It is a good way for the club to develop and it helps you understand the way the club works. It's not too late, just make contact with any Committee member, details are on the back of each newsletter.

- Nigel Harland

Hear an expert on the mysterious Microbats

Newstead Landcare's first presentation for the year will be at

Newstead Community Centre at 3pm on Saturday 28th March.

The speaker is **Dr Lindy Lumsden**, wildlife ecologist at the Arthur Rylah Institute, who has been conducting ecological research on bats for over 30 years. In her talks she describes fascinating and little known aspects of the natural history of these nocturnal creatures. As most people do not have the opportunity to see bats close up, she brings along a live bat to show at the end of her talk. As usual **everyone is welcome to come to the presentation.** Gold coin donation entry.

Lindy will follow the presentation with a **field trip** to Green Gully to show how she goes about discovering what bats are in an area. We will help her set up bat traps and a bat detector and have a b.y.o. picnic meal while waiting for dusk when the bats start getting active. Limited places. You need to **book as soon as possible!** \$15 a head, children free. Contact Frances Cincotta on 5476 2691 or Email: natives@newstead.vicmail.net

February Excursion to Cairn Curran 14.2.2015

Geraldine Harris

Sunny afternoon after morning showers, 2pm – 4pm.

Participants: Cheryl & Ron, Lorna, Margaret C, George, Noel, Geraldine,

1st Stop - Baringhup Road just north of Joyce's Creek Bridge

Black-winged Stilt (4)
Pelican (5)
Masked Lapwing (many)
Australian Shelduck (2)
Silver Gull (5)
Great Cormorant (4)
Magpie Lark
Little Pied Cormorant
Australian Wood Duck (2)
White-faced Heron (2)
Welcome Swallows
Australian White Ibis (4)
Pied Cormorant
Red Wattlebird
Willy Wagtail (2)
Great Crested Grebe
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Australian Magpie

In Transit

Yellow-rumped Thornbill
Willy Wagtail

2nd Stop - Picnic Point, Cairn Curran

Australian Magpie (2)
Raven
Welcome Swallows
Red-rumped Parrots (6, including 3 immature)
Black Kite
Great Cormorant (4)
Superb Fairy Wren (immature male)
White-breasted Woodswallow (2)
European Goldfinch
Tree Martin
White-faced Heron
White-plumed Honeyeater

3rd Stop – South of Bridge in Newstead (Loddon River)

White-plumed Honeyeater
White-browed Scrubwren (6)
Sacred Kingfisher

Total species: 29

Cover Photo - Joy Weatherill

This ground nest containing four attractive eggs was proudly owned and no doubt fiercely defended, by Masked Lapwings (Spur-winged Plover)

The Gallery

1. Debbie Worland

Powerful Owl and Owlet Nightjars



2. Denis Hurley

Some rewards for being out with Lesley, Ern and Richard on quadrat counts, 2014



A Note From Cape Bridgewater

Max Schlachter

In January Emma and I spent half a day at Cape Bridgewater, just west of Portland.

Our initial reason for wanting to visit was the words 'Petrified Forest' written on the tourist map. Having a fascination with all things petrified, this piqued my interest quite a bit. But as many of you may already know, and as we learnt upon arriving at the 'petrified forest' – it isn't that at all. The tubular rock formations are actually limestone tubes. Still interesting, but not fossilised tree stumps.

There were lots of other things to do at the cape. We walked from the not-petrified forest around the cape to the bay on the eastern side. On the way we stopped to watch New Zealand and Australian Fur Seals getting up to all sorts of seal business like fishing, sun-bathing, fighting and frolicking. And we enjoyed reaching the top of the highest sea cliff in Victoria at the exact moment a storm crossed the cape with enough wind and rain to make a shower at the end of the day completely unnecessary.

But my favourite thing about Cape Bridgewater was seeing a familiar face in an unexpected place. A Swamp Wallaby, happily browsing on some stunted coastal shrubs whilst teetering on the edge of a 100 foot cliff. Perhaps it was on a seaside holiday too?

N.B There is a real petrified forest at Curio Bay in New Zealand. Does anyone know of other examples?



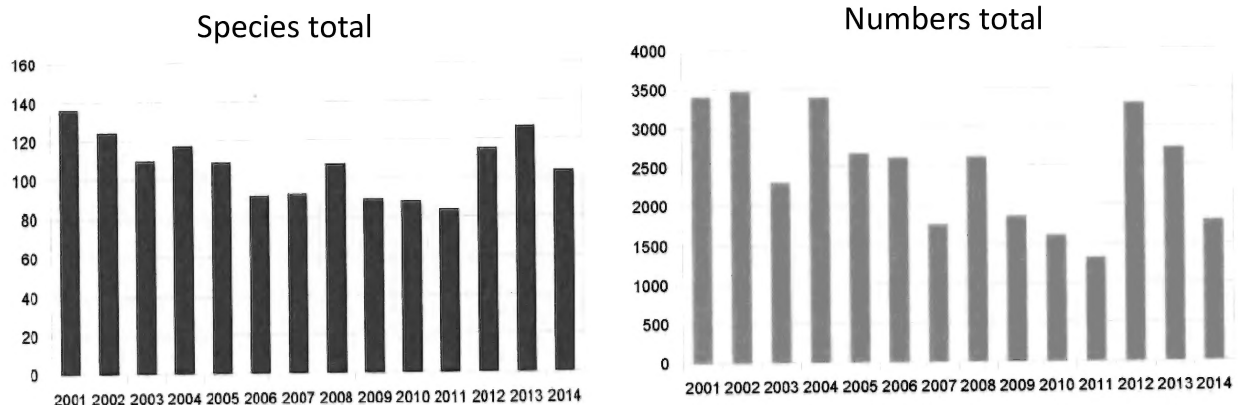
Kalimna Park burn plans

Most of the park is scheduled to be control burned for asset protection this autumn at a time when conditions are deemed suitable between March and May. For further information and discussion see the Friends of Box Ironbark Forests website - www.fobif.org.au

The Castlemaine Bird count graphs

Noel Young

Chris Morris has supplied the latest totals and suggested that we compare them with previous years, so I have updated the bar graphs which have been published on previous occasions. I am not sure how much can be read into trends given the variables such as the number of observer teams we can muster, and perhaps food and water availability, but they do appear to show a steady decline through the drought years followed by a 'bounce-back' after 2011. What do you think?



Observations

At the February meeting -

- ◆ Geraldine told of her grand-daughter discovering a Perrins Tree frog in the toilet
- ◆ Natalie had two Straw-necked Ibis visit Weynton rd. - first time seen
- ◆ Denis ventured out at sunset last Thursday and saw two micro-bats flying over the house, a Ring-tailed Possum emerging from the Tuan box, a common Brushtail with a baby in the shed, and a Phascogale running around a tree
- ◆ Geoff has twice noticed Wedge-tailed Eagles circling over the property
- ◆ Hans passed around a specimen of Prickly Moses with an infestation of fine web-like material apparently housing larvae of a tiny beetle which he had seen emerging (a specimen of the beetle was also produced) One of five plants has already died, and a search of the internet has not been successful. It is also affecting Hakea, and remains a mystery

later -

- ◆ Geraldine had a Lesser Long-eared bat flying around the bedroom one night
- ◆ Richard saw four New Holland Honeyeaters in his Melbourne garden
- ◆ Max reported Rainbow Lorikeets in the Kalimna park

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists

Coming events

Fri March *6 meeting: Speaker PHIL COLLIER

Sat March 7 field trip: Mt Macedon - leader Richard Piesse

Fri April 10 meeting: Speakers ALBERT & ELEANOR WRIGHT : Birds

***NB** The meeting in March has been moved back to Friday 6th in order to avoid a clash with the opening of the Castlemaine Festival.

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.

Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.

Business meetings - third Thursday of each month, except December, at George Broadways; 24a Greenhill Ave., at 6.00 pm. Members are invited to attend.

Club website - <http://castlemaineefnc.wordpress.com/>

Subscriptions for 2015

Ordinary membership: Single \$30, Family \$40

Pensioner or student: Single \$25, Family \$30

Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

2015 Committee

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|---------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------|
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